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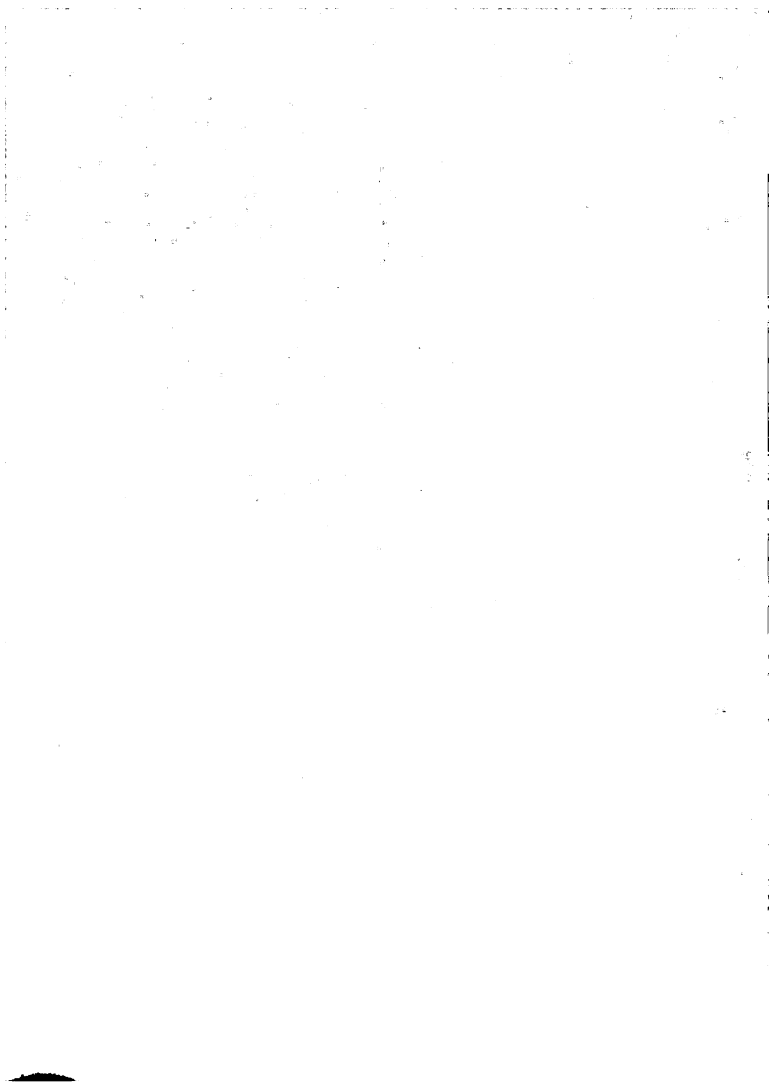
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THIS WORLD, OR THE NEXT?

THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS,
QUESTIONED AND ANSWERED.

BY

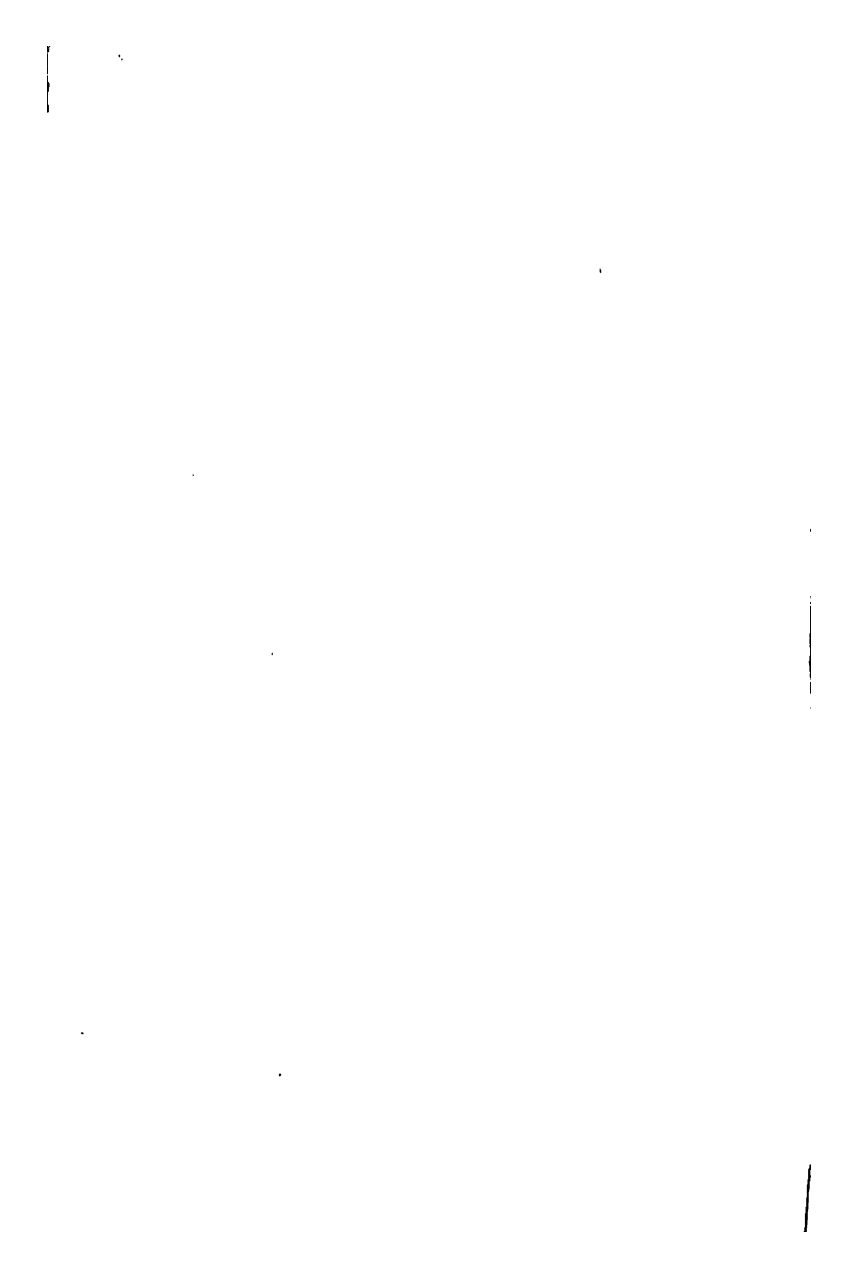
THE REV. W. CLARKSON,
IPSWICH.



"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world,
shall keep it unto life eternal."

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MDCCCLVI.



PREFACE.

IN a mahogany case, in a small recess of the stern cabin of the steamer "Candia," bound from Alexandria to Malta, on my homeward voyage, I met with a book from a well-known author, "Is it possible to make the best of both Worlds?" With the fresh reminiscences of India, where I had seen converts to Christ give up this world for the next, Missionaries renounce high worldly prospects in government service for their fidelity to Christ and their "respect to the recompense of the reward," I mentally answered the question with prompt decision, "No." I did not retract this response, after I had read the book. Although its perusal gave me considerable pleasure, I could not sympathize with its end and aim. As soon as I got on *terra firma* I recorded in my note-book some thoughts in connexion with the general subject. There they might have slumbered, but for the demand of the "Ipswich Young Men's Christian Association" for a lecture. Such is the history of my first attention to this subject. The

special form, however, which my thoughts have now assumed, has had reference not so much to that book, as to the affirmative of the question, as I find it actually entertained by advocates of the theory, and especially as I see it acted out in their lives. The author of the work in question has limited its reference to a special class—that of young men; he has also with discrimination guarded his theory, hedged it round, and warned against its abuse. But the practical men of the present day, who entertain the theory, give it a more pregnant meaning and a wider application. They carry it into practice, both in spirit and in letter, with greater latitude, and are more devoted disciples of the system, than the respected first proposer and answerer of the question would wish or could regard without serious apprehension on their behalf.

Against the theory, then, as thus entertained by those who really wish to make the best of this world, and not to lose the next, sanctioning worldly pursuits and ends, bringing down high spirituality, and secularizing the soul, the train of thought in this lecture is directed. May worldly professing Christians be led by it to give up an attempted service of God and Mammon, and to “**SET THEIR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH!**” **AMEN.**

THIS WORLD, OR THE NEXT?

THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS,
QUESTIONED AND ANSWERED.

Two worlds!—both within the compass of a man's thoughts and apprehension. How comprehensive and dignified the human mind that can attach itself to so capacious a world as this, take in the vast compass of the present sphere of existence, and yet stretch forth and grasp a future—completely shut out from vision, lying far in the remoteness of space, and extending into the endlessness of eternity—known only by the revelation of God, and apprehended only by faith.

Well might the poet say, "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!—the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

In more measured terms, but with more authority, might the inspired bard of Israel say, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour."

Let us endeavour to form an estimate of these two worlds as connected with our own destiny and blessedness.

First, Are they indeed, relatively to us, distinct and independent in their interests? Although we disassociate them

in space and time, may we do so with regard to our own being and destiny? Estimating our continuous existence and aggregate interests, dare we think of this world as apart from the next, or of the next as apart from this? Can we predicate good or evil of this world as isolated from that which is to come? Do not both worlds constitute but one grand sphere, whereon we live and move and have our being? Is not this world but the promontory of that outlying continent which we call the next world, and is not time itself to us but the threshold of eternity?

As childhood solves itself into youth and gives it its tone and character, youth into manhood, and manhood into age, so does not this temporary life resolve itself into the eternal? And are we not by this fact of the divine economy precluded from assigning to one world a "best" or a "worst," viewed apart from the other? Must we not take in *the next*, in order to predicate anything worth the predication, of *this*? And ought we not, in all wisdom and justice to ourselves, to refuse to disconnect any pursuit or enjoyment of the life that now is from the destinies of that which is to come?

Seeing that this world is but initial and preparatory to the next, and life is but the probationary and qualifying season for eternity, it is manifest that the essential quality of the one consists in the character of its bearings on the other.

Whatever is intrinsically beautiful, gorgeous, and imposing in the scenes of this earth; whatever there may be gratifying to sense, delightful to fancy and imagination, in its multiplied objects; however rich human life may be in its several relationships, however fraught with social loves or domestic joys, and abundant in circumstances ministrative to human happiness; "this world and all that it inherits" becomes utterly insignificant compared with its sublime but solemn relation to eternal blessedness and woe.

Were this life an unmingled elysium, and the succeeding

existence one of misery, that elysium would be nought save a mockery and snare. We should not dare to speak good of it in face of the eternal evil in which it would be swallowed up. On the other hand, were this life replete with woe, but succeeded by eternal bliss, we should not predicate evil of it, seeing the absorption of that evil by the everlasting good.

Now to these two worlds thus mutually connected how is man actually affected? We have seen their relations to him; what are the aspects of his soul to them? Does he in his practical life remember and appreciate their relations to him, or does he not involve himself in moral ruin by ignoring them?

Observe, he is linked to *this* world by his entire physical being, by the necessities of want, and by the powers of appetite—appetite that has by the original fall already passed the bounds of nature, and become corrupt. Not only do his several senses, having in them neither good nor evil, attach him to the varied objects that may be seen, heard, touched, tasted, but his passions and affections instinctive and acquired bind him in bonds that would seem indissoluble to the material economy of this world. His soul—the breath of the Almighty within him—instead of resisting the impulses of sense, sympathizes with them, urges on the body to action, uses its members as instruments of unrighteousness, becomes itself degenerate, engrossed, secularized, sometimes sensual and devilish. Instead of maintaining a lordly power over the earthly elements, it becomes subjected to them. Instead of feeding on the spiritual nourishment that even this world affords, and thriving by it, it takes up with garbage, finds its aliment in all that is gross and earthly, and, as a consequence, becomes itself earthly.

Such is man as poets, true to nature, have described him, as philosophers have analyzed his complex being, and as Holy Scripture, which knoweth the deep things of man, has represented him. Such is man as, when unregenerate, he

has ever uniformly developed himself. Such is man as he becomes revealed in the consciousness of the regenerate.

Attaching himself then to this world, failing out of its elements to educe wisdom and holiness, and on the contrary only appropriating evil, it were impossible that he should hunger and thirst for the unmingled purities of the world to come. His aspirations cannot reach upward and heavenward; his sympathies cannot be bound up with the holinesses of the upper sanctuary. To that world no senses link him, no music of its spheres reaches his ear, no beams of its glories strike on his eye, none of its secrets penetrate the chambers of his soul. If he apprehend it firmly, it can be only by faith; if he seek for its honours and glories, it can only be by the affections and energies of a soul directed thitherward by the Holy Spirit. The question, "This world or the next?" elicits from him the prompt answer, "*This—this—* as the only sensible reality. The next *may be*; this *is*. The interests of the next world are remote, its destinies are probably fixed; I cannot mould nor control them. That which will come, *will* come. The two worlds are wide apart, and separate in interests;—I cannot serve them both."

If such be a true delineation of man's moral position and character, we might expect that a Revelation, given expressly to secure his salvation, to make him a child of God, and by varied discipline to qualify him for an inheritance above, would divert his affections from the nether world, out of whose elements his depravity has drawn corruption, to the world above;—that it would seek to disengage him from earthly bonds,—to sublimiate his earthly tendencies; and as the soul had become carnal by diffusing itself into that which is grosser, it would make it spiritual by inducing it to diffuse itself into that which is heavenly.

This is what Revelation has done. The substance of its exhortation to men is, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." It seeks to relieve their worldly

minds of groundless cares, by declaring that God is interested in their behalf, and that as His omniscience knows what is needful for them, so His grace will supply it. Far from presenting to man the "best of this world" as aught that he should "make," even though in conjunction with the best of the next world, it takes out of his hands the very occasion to do so, by assuring him that the "making" of his own earthly portion—the working out of his own worldly good—is not his legitimate work at all; but that if he "seek first the kingdom of God," his Father, who is the only "Maker," will "add" to him whatever of the earthly He deems for his good. It urges him not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world. It declares that those things, comprising all that ministers to the lust of the eye and the flesh, and to life's pomp and vanities, have not their origin in his Father—God; and that those whose affections go forth towards them convict themselves of faithlessness of heart to the only true LORD, and as such are "adulterers and adulteresses." It lays down as the characteristic of the true heirs of eternal life, that they are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, the spiritual descendants of pilgrim-fathers, of whom the world was not worthy, and of whom the Lord was not ashamed;—nay, that they are dead, that their life is hid with Christ in God; that they are crucified to the world, and the world to them.

Revelation does not stay to define *how much* of earth may be loved consistently with spirituality, nor to draw a definite line between the *use* of this world and its *abuse*. It is solicitous to infuse all that is heavenly into the earthly, rather than to show how much of earthly enjoyment may be compatible with the heavenly. It solves no problem whereby the "best" of the next may be happily made to square with the "best" of *this* world, and the gainer of a heavenly inheritance lose not a grain of the sands of earth. To do so would have been trifling with souls, and beguiling them into the very ruin

whence it sought their deliverance. It challenges undivided thought and concentrated energy, childlike simplicity and godly truthfulness, for the working out of the problem of salvation; and, assured that, notwithstanding its "lines upon lines and precepts upon precepts," man will ever tend to earth, and seek to appropriate the material and sensible, it alarms him by the question, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Still further to wean him from earth, and to justify its own heavenward lessons, it declares that "the fashion of this world passeth away," that the glory of human life—health, strength, riches—is but as the "flower of grass," and that he alone abideth "who doeth the will of God."

Such being the solemn "message of the skies," how say some among us that we may make the best of both worlds?

Unless the language *be divested of its ordinary meaning and the theory be stripped of everything which makes it worth while to defend it*, does not its very front oppose the letter and spirit of the divine teaching, and go to place man in a new and unscriptural relationship to the life that now is and that which is to come? I oppose not a book but a sentiment, one which has insinuated itself into many minds, and which is, alas! carried out with scrupulous fidelity in the practical details of every-day life. Are there not many among us who, whether they have mentally framed for themselves a theory or not, are yet practically evincing that they pursue the pleasures and glories of two worlds?—that they are candidates for "glory, honour, and immortality" above, and yet are grasping the things of earth; desirous of laying up treasure in heaven, yet not renouncing it on earth, and trying to engage their hearts in both; who profess themselves studious not to lose the next world, and are *as* studious not to be disengaged from this;—whose entire career is an essay at work-

ing out a problem antagonistic to the Saviour's express words—the saving their life without losing it.

We now hasten to put the question. "Is it possible to make the best of both worlds?" We would answer it in the most comprehensive way. If the terms, "best of this world," are used in the worldly sense, we answer, *No*; if they be used in the purely Christian sense, we answer, *Yes*. We proceed, first, to vindicate the affirmative.

The Christian who, we here assume, does make the best of the next world, having by faith secured the life that is to come, may also make the best of this world in the following sense :

First, He may have a conscious *property* in it. The world is God's—His creation—His property. It is the Christian's also by sympathy with Him the Creator, by filial participation in it as an adopted *son*, and by a special title of inheritance as being in Christ. Abraham was declared heir of the world; so are his spiritual descendants. The true believer is not, as are others, merely located on it, but he possesses it by right of joint heirship with Him, "in whom he is complete" in all rights and privileges as well as in the endearments of a justified and sanctified relationship. This consciousness is the reward of those qualities to which the earth is promised as an inheritance, and is possessed by all who fully realize the life of faith. Such do appropriate the world as their own. This sublime thought has been thus expressed by Cowper :

"His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers; his to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say,—My Father made them all.
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,

Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world,
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?"

Further, the Christian is *lord over it*. "The sage," said the Stoics, "has true riches: he is a king." "We are made kings unto God," saith the sacred Scripture. Universal man rules over the brute creation and subdues the elements of nature, but the Christian sage rules the moral elements of this world. Having by the Spirit of God acquired self-dominion, he exercises a world-dominion. He does not serve it as a vassal, prostituting his noble and divine powers to its behests. He refuses to subject himself to its blandishments, or yield his soul to its fascinations. His divine Redeemer said, "I have overcome the world." He shares in this holy conquest, and will be glorified as a victor.

Moreover, The true believer is able to extract from the world its true, permanent enjoyments. His divine nature enables him to seize and eliminate whatever in the world is divine. To the pure, the world is pure. He disengages the elements of good from the involved mass in which they are found, and secures them for his rational enjoyment, his mental nourishment, and spiritual life. He dare not say, for he cannot feel, with the poet, "This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a steril promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." He dare not adopt as his own the dark views of this world and of human life, expressed by many a sadly stricken mourner. He views the world in connexion with its God. To him it glows with his Father's presence, and is lighted up by His smile. The stars are the more lustrous that they shadow forth His light; beauty is more beautiful as the emblem of His beauty; har-

mony more harmonious because it is the emblem of God's eternal harmonies. The world is to him a countless assemblage of emblems and types and shadows. These may be transitory, but are suggestive of everlasting truths, and shadow forth his own future glory. He is in fellowship with Him who is the soul of the world, and therefore it is not to him as to many, a lifeless body: to others the world is a temple, it is to him *the temple of God* with the Shechinah. Into the holy of holies, he as a priest dare enter, and gaze on the enshrined glory. His earthly good is from God, and is enhanced by this consciousness; the bitterness of his earthly portion is mitigated by the confidence that his Father has tempered all its elements.

Further, This nether world, dark to others, is to him rendered bright and joyous by the light cast on it from the upper world. Viewing it, not as an end but as a means, not as a permanent sphere but as a lodging, not as a port but as the sea, sometimes smooth and sometimes troubled, on which he voyages—he can enjoy or forbear it. If he enjoy, he can do so with safety, for his “affections are on things above.” If he forbear, he can do so without exhaustion of feeling, for his “life is hid in God.” Disappointments will not cast him down, nor bereavements wither his soul.

Still further, the pious may make the best of this world, by enjoying in it the foretaste of the next. Else, what means “that peace of God which passeth understanding,” that “joy unspeakable and full of glory,” that “grace, mercy, and peace,” under which Inspiration sums up its highest blessings, and which so completely overshadow the ordinary good of this world,—those prelibations of glory, which the true men of grace have tasted,—that patience in conflict, strength in endurance, glow of heart and hope of spirit in duty,—those joyous effluxes of the mind towards the good and imperishable,—those sympathies of the soul with God the only good, and Him the only wise? Are not these the

portion of the true believer? May they not be realized according to the measure of his faith and love? Then verily he does make the best of this world.

Nor let it be forgotten that the Christian fulfils in the noblest sense the relationships of earth, and realizes their highest enjoyments. If, as all acknowledge, the greatest blessedness of life is from the relationships with which it is invested, then has the Christian certainly "the best of this world." Social loves, domestic joys and endearments, the delights of friendship, and fellowship of souls—these are *his* in a sense and degree in which they can be possessed by none else. He apprehends their essential natures and designs, and appropriates their refined and sublimated uses. In moral sympathy with God, he most of all sympathizes with God's purposes and arrangements in the social economy. If the founder of the Stoic school, under the mere inspiration of reason, yet viewing things in their moral essences and the relationship of the disciplined mind to them, could say, "The Philosopher is the true King and Priest," then may we, estimating the relationships of the outer world to *sanctified* mind, insist that the true Christian sustains the relations of son, father, husband, friend, in a sense and degree unattainable by others.

No one can have candidly read Biography, that revelation of man's inner being, without perceiving that no glow of conjugal love, no filial attachment, no parental solicitude and affection, no fervour of friendship, is to be found in a form so intense yet so pure, so impassioned yet so genuine, as in the real Christian.

Lastly, The Christian may secure to himself the "best of this world" by making everything in it subservient to his eternal good. Its joys and sorrows, its comforts and trials, bitter and sweet, work together for his everlasting good. Every second of time, as it brings eternity nearer to him, so may be made a help to his glory. The gifts of God may be

made to minister to principles of gratitude and love. His trials and chastisements prepare him for being glorified. Even the "mammon of unrighteousness" may be diverted from its unrighteous uses, and applied as an article of holy merchandise to "make friends who shall receive into everlasting habitations." Seeds cast away by others, wasted on deserts, or thrown down the passing stream, may be seized by him, and deposited so as to yield a future harvest of glory. No evil whence he cannot educe good,—no good which he may not make a minister to his welfare.

Having vindicated the appropriation of the "best of this world" by the real Christian, in the spiritual sense as opposed to the worldly, I need not stay to point out its compatibility with the best of the next world. The more a man makes of the next world, the more in this sense he makes of this; and the more of this, a still further increase of the next.

We pass on to question the possibility of making the best of this world, in the ordinary sense, in conjunction with the best of the next world. Our first remark is, that to *make the best* of one world or the other involves the application of mind, the laying down of plans, working them out, using energies, framing thoughts, and fixing affections. The question is not, Is it possible that God should bestow on us earthly good, whilst we give ourselves to His service and fulfil His righteousness? but, Is it possible for us to *make* the best of this world?—essentially involving on our part use of means conjointly directed to two ultimate ends. If we substitute the word "receive" for "make," I cease to argue on the point. What I contend against is the possibility of directing efforts towards and following after the attainment of this world's "best" and heaven's "best" at the same time.

Thus much signification must attach itself to the word "make," and is, in fact, entertained by the sincere theorist.

Do any inquire of us, May not the righteous candidates for heaven be blessed by God with earthly prosperity? Of

course they may; that possibility rests with God. The inquiry, to be worth anything for the sake of a theory, is, May successful candidates for heaven be at the same time successful candidates for earth? Can they succeed by personal effort in securing the best of this world and the next consentaneously? This possibility, if it exist, abides with man, that is, it must rest on his exertions, and we must settle it from the human, not the divine, stand-point. The ranges of God's possibilities are never just measures for the direction of human energies.

And here we cannot but observe that it is dangerous work to be staking human blessedness on a mere possibility. Supposing we at once answer, *Yes*; it is *possible* to secure all the good of heaven, and all worldly good. What then? *What is that possibility worth to us?* Can mere possibility furnish a sufficient motive to a particular course of conduct? Is it a basis broad enough to sustain the structure we would raise? Before we can venture on an experiment in which we may fail,—and if we do fail it will be once for all and for ever,—can we be satisfied with less than the highest probability, not to say certainty, of success? That we may make the best of the next world, is a certainty founded on the promises of God. That we may make the best of both worlds, is a mere possibility founded only in man's speculations. Is that enough for us whereon to stake our everlasting welfare? The region of possibilities in questions of human conduct and experiments of human salvation, is one of pitfalls and quicksands and snares. The human soul cries out for certainties and assurances,—for issues that are indubitable. We object to the question, then, *in* and *of* itself. It would lead us from the old beaten path whose terminus is sure because it is single. Even in secular affairs how few act on possibilities! It is possible to obtain large dividends on weak securities, but what capitalist ever acts on that possibility? Good security and small dividends are the rule of judicious

investments. It is possible to traverse the ocean without a compass, or with an imperfect chronometer, but every wise voyager is careful that his compass is in order, and his chronometer keeps time.

We ask, what is the good of this question at all, if we are not to frame our conduct by the answer given to it? But to act on a mere acknowledged possibility—what a fearful risk in matters affecting an immortal being with its everlasting interests and irreversible alternatives!

In discussing the question before us, we purpose, I. To invalidate the theory. II. To question the facts alleged in corroboration of the theory. III. To repudiate the principle which is founded on the theory.

I. We object to the theory. The argument may be presented in a condensed form thus: The natural tendency of virtue is to the production of temporal good as well as eternal blessedness. Ergo, a man by the practice of virtue may work out a two-fold good result—one earthly, the other heavenly. In the most literal sense "godliness is gain."

We reply, The premises must be seriously qualified. We admit in its fullest extent the attribute claimed for virtue. Its essential tendencies are to good—good of all kinds—good unmingled. Were its developments free and unchecked, they would issue only in blessedness temporal and eternal. But in a world of sin like this—a world so apostatized from its Creator, as that another no less than the Incarnate Evil is called its "god," and its "ruler," and its "powerful prince," the tendencies of virtue are *resisted* by other tendencies. If moral good has to develop its natural energies, so has moral evil. These two powers are coming into collision at every turn of human life and circumstance, and with regard to the issues of temporal good, evil is oftentimes triumphant. Counter-forces are brought into action by the "god of this world," which impede the natural workings of virtue, suspend

its legitimate issues, and seem at times to overpower it. The ruler of this world would seem to have a large power allowed to him of encouraging vice and discouraging virtue, by giving temporal rewards to the one, and denying them to the other. He certainly has no other rewards to give, nor other good that he can refuse.

This is the sole sphere of his authority, and he urges it to the utmost bounds. On the one hand, he refuses temporal good to virtue, lest it should gain encouragement, and raise its head in a world of evil,—on the other, he lavishes his bounties on evil, that it may reign. Hence the great mystery of Providence, which has agitated the most pious minds and solemn hearts of all ages. Under all states of society, and in all divine dispensations, God has confounded human theories of moral government, giving to virtue a very scanty portion of worldly prosperity, and often allowing her to be desolate, afflicted, tormented; and allowing unrighteousness to reap an earthly good and attain a temporary exaltation;—reserving to Himself in a future state of existence to reward the one and avenge the other. How many of the wicked have had a good earthly lot, and the righteous received the converse—though God's providence has seemed to be darkened by the fact, the virtuous have had their faith shaken, impiety has waxed bold, and infidelity has become confirmed.

The heathen have often wondered at the Judge of all the earth, and been tempted to abandon their little faith in His providence. The pious Israelite at times found the burden too heavy to bear,—the fire in his heart was a consuming one.

Further, the world is too ill affected towards virtue—that virtue which makes the best of the next world—not to oppose its natural workings for temporal good. This has been the case from the beginning; but Christ, who brought a sword and division into social life, has rendered it still less possible for the world to place itself into such relationships

to his true disciple as that his virtue may work out its own issues. The world will do its utmost to impoverish, to enchain, to afflict.

The prophecy of Milton's archangel to Adam has never yet been found untrue.

"So shall the world go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign;
Under her own weight groaning."

The hatred and persecution of the ungodly are the certain portion of the believer. Between him and the world there is and ever must be a state of irreconciliation. That is, so long as the world is not reconciled to God.

But further, allowing that in our own ameliorated state of society, pervaded as it is by so many elements of Christianity, virtue unrestrained and unopposed may have her legitimate issues in worldly prosperity, how then stands the argument for the next world? Is not the prosperity of this world in its tendencies and natural issues inimical to our making the best of the next world? If virtue work temporal good, does not temporal good work moral evil? not indeed by its own energy, but by reason of the depraved susceptibilities of the heart.

Of all the facts of human nature, is it not most patent that the "best of this world" has a strong tendency to generate the opposite qualities to those required for making the best of the next world? Poverty of spirit towards God, and meekness towards man, dependence, patience, spiritual-mindedness, deep sympathies with humanity,—these are certainly not the qualities naturally generated by the "best of this world." Rather is a strong and almost agonizing conflict necessary to prevent the formation of the very contraries. Is not Jeshurun, who "waxed fat and kicked," the very type of humanity in its best forms? And though special grace may at times prevent this natural development, and afford illustrious in-

stances of exalted piety, in spite of the "best of this world," are not such illustrations of grace "few and far between," exceptional rather than universal, and by their very scarcity and novelty proving so many warnings against the presumption of making the experiment in question? This is not one of the Almighty's everlasting circles, whereby the producing cause is itself increased in power by the thing which it produces. There is no action and re-action here, so that the effect may reproduce its own cause. Here temporal good, which is the effect, is inimical to the virtue which originated it, and has a tendency to wear it out. The theory in question, then, is unsound, for while it recognises the tendencies of virtue, it ignores the tendencies of temporal good. If the former tend to secure the best of this world, the latter does not tend to secure the best of the next world. Hence no rational probability of securing the best of both.

Does not God Himself often interfere, in regard to the pious, to check the tendencies of temporal good, and prevent them from working out a spiritual evil? How many of the godly are by stroke on stroke bereft of earthly good, lest their piety should by it become deteriorated! God is *forced* (so to speak) to rob them of earthly treasure, that they may not rob themselves of a divine one.

Such being ^{the}the actual phenomena of virtue and vice, in their relation to worldly good, *the moral sense of mankind founded on them has ever opposed the theory in question.* The mental history of India has comprised more forms of religion than the whole world beside. But of all its forms I know not one which goes so counter to the moral convictions of mankind, as to predicate the possibility of making the "best of both worlds." Few religions, if any, would refuse to admit such principles as are contained in these Indian proverbs. "Sacrifice is the condition of reward;" "The loss of one world is the gain of another;" "Lose your house and you save it. Save your house and you lose it;" "The way

to live is to die, the way to die is to live;" "The greedy, the lustful, the angry, may have salvation, but the double-minded devotee will fail."

Now, if we inquire what has hitherto kept the multitudes in our own country from seeking the kingdom of God, the answer will be, in part, the deep conviction they entertain, that in so doing they must renounce the "best of this world." They *feel*, though they may not reason, that virtue, evangelical virtue, has a difficult part to play in an evil and adulterous generation, and that though it indisputably wins heaven, there is a strong probability that it will lose earth. The servant must often lose his situation or his truthfulness; the master must give up his high Christian honour or his customer; the statesman must part with a principle or suffer loss of popularity; the minister of God must please men and suffer corresponding loss from God, or must please God and suffer loss from man. Certainly, we of the nineteenth century have not seen society otherwise moulded. Things may be different, and will be so, in the millennium, but the possibility which forms the question of this lecture is one *of* and *for* this century and English society. Temporal interest and claims of Christian duty must come into collision. It is the very ordeal of virtue, the very fire by which it is tried and purified.

Now, are the moral sentiments to which we have referred false? Are they not the results of men's own observation, of virtue's severe conflict with the moral elements around it, and of the circumstances so adverse to it of human life and condition? Exceptions which may exist, of virtue's unimpeded course, issue from peculiar circumstances, and are confined to certain spheres. They are scarcely obvious and striking enough to influence men in general, or to form their convictions.

The argument against the theory then stands thus: Virtue is checked and hindered in her natural tendencies to the production of temporal good. So that the virtuous may not

depend on "making the best of this world." Where it is not thus hindered, temporal good itself has a tendency to pervert the heart from moral good. So that those who do make the best of this world are in great danger of not "making the best of the next world."

II. We proceed to question the facts which are cited to corroborate the theory. There are many Christians who maintain their religious profession,—are useful in the world—active in the Church of God—have a solid Christian character; they have made the best of this world, it is said, and for aught we know to the contrary are making the best of the other world. These are pointed out as living illustrations of the theory. Before we recognise these cases as bearing on the theory, let us remark, first, that many have not *made* the best of this world, but only *inherited* it. The lines have *fallen* to them, they have not *laid them down*. Property and easy circumstances have *met* them,—they did not create them. Secondly, when they have created them under the divine blessing by diligence, prudence, virtue, there are serious demurrers to acknowledging them as having made *the best of this world*. Are there not in the case of some, at any rate, serious drawbacks? Recognising them not simply in their individuality but in their relationships—their children especially, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh;—witnessing (no uncommon occurrence) the very absence of those qualities which marked the parent and wrought out for him the best of this world—indolence instead of industry, dependence instead of independence, effeminacy rather than manly courage and Christian virtue—qualities these which have issued out of the very parental circumstances,—viewing, I say, the children as bound up with the parents, having if not an inseparable existence yet inseparable interests, shall we admit they have *made the best of this world*? Had their income been less, their circle of acquaintance of another character, their means less

abundant, and a class of valuable qualities been imparted to their children, would not their claim be more valid than it is at present to their having made the best of this world? The "best" certainly can never be predicated of the mere abundance of a man's possessions. The term as limited to this world must yet comprehend *all* circumstances and associated interests.

Again, are there not proverbially a large class of anxieties and cares connected with "the best of this world," which qualify its character, and detract from its enjoyment? The precarious tenure on which it must be held, the array of circumstance which seems to envy it and detract from its blessedness,—does not this infuse something into "the best" which goes towards vitiating its excellence?

Further, in citing any one as having made the best of this world, do we fail to perceive that "the best" in the estimation of the observer may not be "best" in that of the possessor?—that the term is purely relative to the state of mind of the latter? One who has made what some might call "the best" may have made the "worst," as far as his own perceptions are exercised, and *vice versa*.

But further; granted that there are many Christians who in the most comprehensive sense have made the best of *this* world, the question of all others important to the argument is, *Have they made the best of the next world?* For the true inquiry is, not whether they who make the best of this world may not make *something* of the next, but whether they may make the *best* of *both*. Now the best of one is patent to our senses, and appreciable by us; not so the other. All that is, is visible and tangible, and we may vouch for it as actually realized; but the best of the next world, who shall vouch for *that*? These prosperous Christians—we trace them onwards to the tomb, and up to that "bourne" all with them has been "the best;" but do we know they have made the *best* of the heavenly sphere of existence? Do not the defenders

of this theory practise a sophism on their own understandings, and beguile their own hearts? Do they not forget that there is to the redeemed a worst of the blessed world as well as a "best," and that there are all but infinite shades of difference between those two extremes? The only thing worth *our* serious inquiry is, May we make the best of this world without detracting in the most minute conceivable degree from our share of heavenly glory?

Are there degrees of blessedness in heaven, different capacities and susceptibilities of enjoyment—varying glories? Surely there are. For whom then is the *best*? Who is the nearest to the throne? or who sits at the right hand? which of the children of the Resurrection approaches nearest to the angels of God, nearest to the enthroned SON, the archetype of all regenerate humanity? If it should only happen to those who have made the best of this world, that from some causes connected with the "making," or which may be inseparable from the possession, of the *best* of this world, there be an inconceivably minute inferiority in their spiritual position and consequent blessedness—that inferiority extending itself through eternity—where would be their *best of both worlds*? Viewing man as a being not of time only but of eternity, is it not evident that if *by* making or *in* making the best of this world, he come in any degree short of the position he might otherwise attain, he has really inflicted on himself an irreparable injury? When we consider how the best of this world has to be made, and is made,—the sources of property, the modes in which it is created or derived, the questionable character of the conventional righteousness which passes current in commercial and other spheres, the faint lines which serve as a demarcation of the true and untrue, the just and unjust, of rights and claims, of wrong and oppression,—these lines appearing more or less dim, according to interest, or prejudice, or education,—are there not reasons for supposing that in many cases the

best of heaven may be in the inverse ratio of the best of earth?

Further, should we lose sight of God's comprehensive law of compensation—that law which pervades all animate being, partial loss and inferiority being made up by some counter gain and superiority? We trace this principle throughout human society in all its multiplied forms and relations, and though sometimes the line becomes broken, we never wholly lose sight of it. What is lacking in one direction is supplied in another, and what is lacking at one *time* is often made up at another. And will there be no extension of this divine constitution *into* the next world? Is the principle of compensation to run through the whole of this economy, and then having spent itself to be laid aside; or will not the world to come witness its consummation? To the poor, and tried, and persecuted, and self-denying for the kingdom of God's sake, are we quite sure that the same exact award will be rendered as to those who have been rich, and full, and free from earthly cares? Independently of moral causes and states of mind, are we quite sure that heaven will be just the very same thing in quantity and quality to those Christians who have made or had the *best* of this world, as to those who have made or had the *worst* of it? At any rate, should we not suspend our judgment as to the fact of *any* having made the best of both worlds, till we reach heaven and obtain the data of actual experience? Does the principle contained in those solemn words, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted and thou art tormented," apply to none other than to the rich unbeliever and the poor believer? Are we sure its range of application is so thoroughly limited as not in any sense or degree to affect the believer who has made the *best*, and him who has made the *worst*, of this world?

And, lastly, is not the next world, in its revealed character-

istics, peculiarly adapted to those who have had the *worst* of this world? The rest, fulness, riches, inheritance, rivers of living water, absence of sorrow, wiping away of tears, which distinguish the heavenly Canaan,—have they not a very marked adaptedness to those who have not enjoyed the best of this world? May it not be found that, after all, the sufferers in and from this world make the best of the next world? And if so, shall we emulate those who, having enjoyed more than others of this world, enter into less in the next?

But observe, if there are facts—and we hail them where they *do* present themselves—which show that a high degree of godliness is consistent with great worldly prosperity, is there not a counter-array of facts of a wholly different character and far more numerous? Against the few wealthy and spiritually-minded, have we not to place the many worldly-minded? Side by side of the few who make the best of both worlds, must we not look at the majority who manifestly do not make the best of the next world? If some few show what the grace of God can do for the Christian, spite of the best of this world, do not many show what the best of this world can do, spite of the grace of God?

Do we customarily seek for those whose lives are most redolent of the sanctities of heaven, in the ranks of the most endowed with this world's goods and comforts? Review our churches. Flourishing, prospering, advancing Christians, in the worldly sense, are *they* most Christ-like,—most sensitive of moral evil,—most unworldly and spiritually-minded? Are the more peculiar features of Christian sanctity maintained amongst *them*? Are *they* most diligent to observe "pure and undefiled religion" in their families, keeping them separate from the evil that is in the world, and unspotted from its corruption? Was there ever a time when that class, as a class, comprised the purest, holiest of the Church? Do not multitudes of rich professors appear before us as

epistles written, not by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of the world, bearing indited in plain characters, "*It is not possible to make the best of both worlds*"?

III. We proceed to repudiate the principle of making the best of both worlds. It is as affording a principle that men care for the theory. If they may not presume on it, and arrange their practice in accordance with it, it is not worth their canvassing. Abstract possibility is the last thing which the business-men of this age care for. The hypothesis, as such, might for them alumber, with scholastic hypotheses, in eternal oblivion. A people of material and secular pursuits only catch at this theory to sustain and warrant a certain mode of action in life. The possibility being admitted, it is of course acted on. The theory established is to be wrought into practice. We therefore address ourselves to reprobate the principle of conduct which is established on the theory.

First, the "best of this world" is not a legitimate object of Christian pursuit. Earthly good is defined in Scripture as "food and raiment." *It* is promised. *It* is declared to be the complement of human contentment. For *it* God may be trusted. For *it* may prayer be daily offered. Beyond *it* there would seem to be no promise, no express sanction.

"The best of this world." Who shall draw the line between it and the "lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life"?—especially as the "best" is nothing in itself positive and definite, but ever capable of being expanded or contracted, refined or engrossed, according to the changing tastes and views of individuals?

Further, "making the best of this world"—who shall by clear bold lines distinguish for himself, or define to others, the difference between it and "loving the world and the things of the world," which is by every sanction forbidden to the Christian? Whose judgment so impartial as to decide where one ends, and the other begins? Who can set affec-

tion on "the best of this world"—and without affections he cannot "make" it—without the more than danger of unhal-
lowed sympathy with the world, and spiritual unison with
it? Can our theorist, who is seeking to make the best of
this world, ever approach in word and spirit to the appeal of
Jesus to *his* Father, "I am not of the world"? Can he class
himself with those of whom Jesus said, "They are not of the
world"? or can he consistently ask an interest in the
prayer of Jesus, "Keep them from the evil that is in the
world"? Can he say to the world, "I despise your pleasures,
for I know their emptiness"? Can he convince them that
he believes respecting earth's good, "Vanity of vanities"?
Is he not seeking it? Is he not "making" it?

And further, in our essaying to "make the best of this
world," is there not a fearful danger of tampering with evil,
—of coming into too close a contact with the powers of dark-
ness—those who, unlike to the angels of God, are ministering
spirits to heirs of wrath? When we remember Satan's tempt-
ation to our LORD, his brilliant offer of "the best of this
world,"—when we call to mind that he is the "god of this
world," and as such must have some regal power and regal
gifts and rewards,—is there not reason to fear that in such
a pursuit as that of the best of this world, we may be con-
strained to infringe on loyalty to our Great King and be
tempted to play into the hands of the Great Enemy? Though
we do not subscribe to the idea of the German poet Schiller,
is there is not much truth underlying the following
lines?

"To the evil spirit doth the earth belong,
Not to the good. All that the powers divine
Send from above are universal blessings:
Their light rejoices us, their air refreshes,
But never yet was man enriched by them:
In their eternal realm no *property*
Is to be struggled for—all there is general.

The jewel, the all-valued gold, we win
From the deceiving powers, depraved in nature,
That dwell beneath the day and blessed sun-light.
Not without sacrifices are they rendered
Propitious, and there lives no soul on earth
That e'er retired unsullied from their service."

We cannot but express our conviction that the "making the best of this world" is opposed to the whole temper and genius of Christianity. Its blessings, its woes, its precepts and promises, the virtues it inculcates, and the vices it deprecates,—all present a hostile front to this principle of action. Its beatitudes are showered down on the poor, the meek, the pure in heart, the mourner, the persecuted, those who are spoken ill of. Are these the characters who are seeking to make the best of this world? Its woes fall on the rich, the full, those who laugh, those of whom all men speak well: are not these characters more akin to those who *do* make the best of this world?

Especially do we deprecate the making the best of this world, because of its inconsistency with the moral character of Christ,—that character to a conformity with which all Christians are predestinated. Christ is the archetype of a new humanity. Every member of this regenerate family is to bear His likeness. The second Adam is the model according to whom all are to be moulded and fashioned by the Spirit of holiness. Now His characteristics were the spirit of self-sacrifice, of abandonment, of vicarious suffering. He emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, and became obedient to the death of the cross. It is expressly enjoined on us that the same mind that was in Him should be in us. The evident design of all that Christ and the apostles said is that we should be conformed to Him, not only in the moral and spiritual qualities which He had as a perfect being, but in those peculiar phases which were developed by Him

in his work of redemption. Who shall dare to maintain that we can consistently with such conformity to Him act on the principle in question? Did the apostle go beyond the Christian standard when he said, "That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and *the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death*"? But did not that sentiment preclude the desire of "making the best of this world"? Were *that* the desire of all Christian hearts, what would become of the heroic, magnanimous, and self-denying in the walks of Christian philanthropy and devotedness? Would this principle make a Howard? Would it ever send a Florence Nightingale to the Crimea? Would it inspire a Martyn, a Judson, or a Carey? Would it send a Moffat to Africa, or train a Williams for a martyr's death in the Southern Seas? Only let the principle of making the best of this world obtain, and it would wither all that is grand and magnanimous, all those higher manifestations of character which so illustriously exhibit divine grace in man.

It may be said, Those who do seek to make the best of this world do so in order to practise and promote these very Christian virtues, that is, to support philanthropic institutions and spread the gospel. We answer, if there be such, we cordially welcome them and bid them God speed; but they are either renouncing the principle I contend against, or hold it in a self-contradictory form. We cannot be "making" the best of this world, and yet parting with it on unselfish objects. Winning to lose is not winning, in the worldly sense. Getting to give is not getting, save in the Christian sense. At any rate this is not the "making" against which I contend. Would that there were more of it!

It may be said further, that "no such claims now exist as to demand great self-sacrifice—that all the operations of Christian philanthropy and evangelism are going on prosperously, and are actually kept up efficiently by those who do make the best of this world." Alas! alas! the claims of

self-sacrifice are even greater than they were in the days of Christ; for opportunities are more abundant, methods more available, spheres more enlarged. Our own land is not half evangelized. In the eastern world there is not a minister of Christ to two millions of people. More than one half of the world is precluded from hearing the gospel of salvation. Claims need but to be recognised, and they are infinite. They have but to be ignored, and they are nought. How few are the men of grace who devote property and time, renouncing the best of this world, to make others partakers of heavenly riches! The Church will supply self-denying rich men, in just the proportion of their esteeming the reproach of Christ as greater than the "treasures of Egypt."

Such are our scriptural objections to "making the best of this world," viewed in itself. They are incalculably stronger against "making" it in conjunction with the best of the next world. If the body of earthly pursuits is so corrupt, how can we dare to link it to the "radiant angel" of heavenly pursuits?

We declare the thing impossible both from the nature of the case and on moral grounds.

1. From the nature of the case. Either pursuit demands undivided aim and unfailing exertion. Both therefore cannot be successful. What of thought and feeling and energy is expended on the one, is detracted from the other, and renders success in the attainment of both impossible. No one denies that a fixedness of purpose, unwavering affection, and concentrated force, are requisite to make the best of the world to come. Jesus tells us that for it we must agonize,—that we must enter it by violence,—that for its successful pursuit we must hate all things, all persons, and even our own life. Paul says that we must run—not uncertainly—that we must follow after, that we may apprehend, and that we must count all things loss for *it's* attainment.

On the other hand, all worldly men will be quick to tell us

that as a rule, to make the best of this world, lays under contribution all time, the sweat of the brow, and the toil of the brain, and it may be, the wear and tear of the heart's strongest fibres; taxes all energies; and, amidst the competition of others, the slipperiness of fortune, the chances of circumstance, nothing less than the whole man with his entire devotedness will secure the prize; and that, even with these conditions, many run, but few obtain it.

Now, *can* we task our energies with these two distinct objects? *Can* we apply our forces in these such opposite directions? *Can* we seek to acquire the glories of this world and of the next? To "lay up treasures" *here*, and store them also *there*? To obtain approbation of man (which must always be estimated as a part of this world's *best*) and also of God? *Can* we do so? Are not the natural difficulties insuperable?

2. It is further impossible on moral grounds. The Saviour declares it so. He says, "Ye *cannot* serve God and Mammon;"—cannot, owing to their essential moral diversity;—cannot, because ye will necessarily "hate the one and love the other, or else ye will forsake the one and hold to the other." Where the treasure is, the heart is also. It cannot be divided.

Secondly, We inquire whether this principle of action is for the regenerate or unregenerate. Let the unregenerate adopt it for their own, and then mark the consequence. It is admitted by us all that the virtue which can secure the interests of both worlds must be evangelical. One of a lower grade, a mere fulfilment of social duties, might secure the best of this world. We see in fact that it does. But that virtue would not secure the higher and holier world. It is agreed, then, that evangelical virtue alone can solve this difficult problem. But how is that to be attained? The principle is manifestly the fruit of the Holy Spirit, produced gradually in the soul of him who has first come to God through Christ as a repent-

ant sinner, entering by faith into a state of reconciliation with God, becoming His adopted child, and as such receiving the Spirit of adoption which emboldens to prayer and suggests it, and receiving in answer the Spirit of holiness. Now, can the unregenerate man, adopting this theory and trying to give it practical efficiency, ever obtain the sanctifying Spirit, without which he cannot become a possessor of evangelical virtue? He believes our theory, and is aware that he must obtain the heavenly gift ere he has the means of making the best of both worlds. But how obtain that gift if he be under the dominion of this two-fold purpose? If, urged by this complex motive, he come to the throne of grace, will it not be in a spirit too nearly allied to him who asked for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and offered money as an equivalent for it? or, rather, will he not occupy a worse position than he, for he will ask for the Holy Spirit in order to get money, or that which money represents, the "best of this world"? Can he, amid his tears of penitence, his sighs and groanings on account of sin, his wrestling for sanctifying grace, allow to intrude a desire for the best of this world, without vitiating all his spiritual exercises? Evangelical virtue, we tell him, secures the best of this world, as well as of the next,—but he must not be under the influence, however minute, of that fact as a motive. To what account then can he convert our principle? None. Granting that we are not damaging the interests of evangelical virtue by pointing out its connexion with the "best" of the life that now is, may we not endanger the man's salvation, by presenting that connexion to him as a motive to secure it? And if we do not present it as a motive, then wherefore do we unfold to him the theory at all? Is it said, We present it only to furnish an encouragement? That modified view is inconsistent with the terms "making" the best of both worlds.

What else then is the principle to the unconverted but the

most treacherous of snares, encouraging them to serve God and Mammon?

The principle of action then is left for the Christian, in whom are already opened up the springs of evangelical virtue. But may *he* adopt the principle? All that we have hitherto advanced goes to prove the contrary. We add a few special reasons.

1. Such a principle of action throws difficulties in the way of his salvation. He is told to "work out his salvation with fear and trembling." Now shall we make that *fear* more fearful, and give intensity to that trembling, by setting before him another object in conjunction with salvation? Looking at him from a human point of view, which is the point of view *we* are always called to occupy, will he not, if he try to act out the theory, be endangering his salvation? If a man has to cross a raging torrent over a slender bridge, and even with collected thoughts and an eye directed to one object, yet finds the passage so difficult as to be attended by fear and trembling, and successful only by persevering care and attention,—what shall become of him who with an eye diverted and attention fixed on something else, endeavours to make his passage? As the vessel steers her course through the straits of Babelmandeb, or, as the Arabs call it, "The Gate of Danger," the eye of the helmsman needs to be fixed and his hand steady,—all noise is forbidden,—and in perfect silence the crew observe the vessel's course, confronted by rocks, diverted by currents, and made wayward by the fitful winds. How could that vessel avoid destruction, were those in charge to have their attention fixed on some of the vessel's stores, or occupied in some economic arrangements? To apply the illustrations, if it be difficult to secure salvation even with the loss of the world—and none have ever found it easy—how intensely arduous must it be with the distraction of seeking the best of this world! Will not

conscience become duller, judgment more partial, the heart less sensitive of moral evil, affections less spiritual, divine sympathies less drawn forth? And can the candidate for salvation afford to have any one of these powers diminished which when united are never found redundant for so infinitely vast a work?

Lastly, this principle of action vitiates piety at the very root, and consequently checks all its better developments. It takes away from the singleness of eye by which the whole moral system is penetrated with light, and without which it is pervaded by darkness. It would go far to justify Satan's accusation, "Doth he serve God for nought?"

In conclusion, wherefore then serves the indisputable principle of the tendencies of virtue to earthly prosperity? It may be applied to encourage under trial, to afford strength under temptation. It may lead us earnestly to anticipate the consummation of this world's history, in which the natural developments of virtue have been so fearfully checked, and yearn for the "new heavens and new earth," wherein, with an everlasting fixedness, righteousness shall dwell, ever putting forth her unchecked energies, opening up her exhaustless treasures, and lavishing blessing on blessing, grace on grace, upon all who love her. Let us admit joyfully all the natural issues of virtue, receive thankfully all its good things, but never seek, save in the sense I have already vindicated, to "make the best of both worlds."

THE END.